

"THE LEGEND OF SAINT NICHOLAS"

SCREENPLAY

BY

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FADE IN

1. EXT. A SHIMMERING SEA. DAY
It is a postcard scene, perfect in its color and beauty. CAMERA PANS slowly to see the snow capped mountains along the not too distant shore. We hear the first notes of our theme fade in quietly as the words of the prologue are superimposed on the scene:

TIME HAS MADE OUR STORY A LEGEND.
BUT FOR CENTURIES, IN THE HEARTS OF
CHILDREN EVERYWHERE, IT HAS BEEN AS
REAL AS THEIR OWN LIVES. AND INDEED,
OF A LEGEND CAN CROSS ALL BORDERS,
CAN BE UNDERSTOOD IN ALL LANGUAGES.
....AND CAN UNITE ALL THE PEOPLES OF
THE WORLD IN ONE COMMON HERITAGE..
WHO IS THERE TO SAY THAT IT DID NOT
REALLY HAPPEN...AND THAT A MAN SUCH
AS NICHOLAS DID NOT REALLY LIVE.

As the final words disappear off the screen, a fishing boat moves onto the scene.
2. TRAVELING SHOT
as CAMERA FOLLOWS the fishing boat toward shore.
3. ABOARD THE BOAT
as the few men on board busy themselves with nets and gear, preparing to moor. We see the quay approaching and several people waving a greeting to our boat.
4. THE QUAY
as our boat moves slowly in to dock. An ESTABLISHING SHOT enables us to see that several other small fishing craft are already tied in. It is a small town but we will see during these few moments that it is busy, hard working and active..with most of its inhabitants taking their living from the sea.
5. EXWIDETAKINGLEADING ONTO THE QUAY.
There is much activity here also. Several carts are emerging from it..heading toward the docks. News are spread out... people are going and coming..tradespeople are hurrying to their shops...housewives have their arms filled with foods and goods. The clothes and the buildings cannot really be ascribed to one particular century. It is many, many hundreds of years ago...that is all of which we can be certain. But as to the people, events and feelings, those...are timeless.
6. MED SHOT-A HOUSE FURTHER DOWN THE STREET
The door opens and a small boy emerges. His name, Frederik.. his age, ten. Bundled up against the cold, he pulls his s-hawl

6.

CONT:

tighter around his neck and begins to polish the runners on his sled which has been leaning against the side of the house. As he looks up now, he sees someone approaching and a look of anticipation lights his face.

FREDERIK

(projecting)

Karel! Come have a ride with me.

7.

ANOTHER ANGLE

picking up KAREL, a boy of like age, approaching down the narrow cobblestone street. He is carrying a bouquet of winter flowers carefully in his hand.

KAREL

I can't. We're going to see Nicholas.

KAREL has drawn abreast of the other boy.

KAREL

I'm late. I can't stop now. But you can come if you want.

He starts to move on...and FREDERIK, puzzled, follows him a few feet.

FREDERIK

Who's Nicholas? Where is he?

When KAREL doesn't reply...

FREDERIK

Karel!

KAREL keeps moving but turns partially around to reply.

KAREL

I can't wait. Come on, Fredrik.
Everyone is going.

KAREL moves on down the street. FREDERIK hesitates. He turns back to his sled but his curiosity has been awakened. He replaces the sled and starts quickly down the street.

FREDERIK

(projecting)

Wait for me, Karel. Wait.

8.

EXT. THE VILLAGE SQUARE
ESTABLISHING SHOT.

Many children are coming into the square from several of the streets that feed into it. They are meeting here. Bouquets of flowers are much in evidence.

9.

MED CLOSE SHOT

as FREDERIK comes into the Square. He cannot catch sight of KAREL but his interest and curiosity heighten even more as he sees all the children and the activity. Finding himself in a swirl of passing children, he tries to stop a few long enough to get some answers but none will linger. They are all moving to a far point in the Square where a procession is congregating.

FREDERIK

Where are you all going.

A PASSING BOY

To see Nicholas.

FREDERIK

Wait, will you...

The PASSING BOY is gone. He stops a girl.

FREDERIK

Who's Nicholas.

A PASSING GIRL

Hurry. They're going to start.

She moves off. He spies a familiar face...and pushes his way to him.

FREDERIK

Karel...

KAREL

You should have brought some flowers.
I forgot to tell you.

FREDERIK

Tell me who Nicholas is.

9.

CONT:

JAN, passing by, overhears. He is also their age.

JAN

He was our friend.

KAREL

You're new here. You didn't know about him yet.

(to others)
Wait for us.

KAREL and JAN hurry off...and the latecomers hurrying into the Square run past FREDERIK until he is alone.

10.

A NEW ANGLE

featuring the children as they are all gathered at the foot of a steep hill which is next to a small church. GAIUS, a tall boy, who is at the head of the procession looks out over the group.

GAIUS

Are we all here? Who's missing?

THE PASSING GIRL

(as she joins the line)
Johanna Bayran.

GAIUS

She's sick. Anyone else?

KAREL

Marten was supposed to be here.

THE PASSING BOY

He's with his father at the salmon banks.banks.

GAIUS

Let's start then.

A song begins among them. A joyous song..a song of congregation. As they start up the hill, FREDERIK finally reaches them.

FREDERIK

(surprised)
You can't go up there.

10.

CONT:

KAREL

Of course we can.

FREDERIK

(frightened)

But you know what's up there.

KAREL

Don't be frightened, Nicholas is ~~so~~
there.

KAREL and the others leave him and he watches the singing children going up the steep hill. Their destination obviously worries him. He wants to follow but he holds back. We can almost see him talking to himself..trying to find the courage to go to a place which frightens him. He starts..stops... starts once again..and then cautiously follows.

11.

EXT. THE TOP OF THE HILL.

Looking down, we see the panorama of the magnificent countryside. CAMERA PANS to reveal it and then comes to rest on the children below. Their voices are faintly reaching up to us. As the first of the children approaches the crest, CAMERA PULLS BACK and we see for the first time that we are in the village cemetery. Now, the children begin to appear in greater numbers and as they see the tombstones, the silence of the place takes hold of them and slowly stills their song. GAIUS, the oldest among them, leads the way to a grave and as they gather respectfully around it, the CAMERA MOVES DOWN to the grave.

12.

CLOSE SHOT-STONE

All that is inscribed there is the simple word:

NICHOLAS

13.

REVERSE ANGLE

Shooting from behind the stone, the last of the children is seen moving into place. In B.G. we see FREDERIK moving forward hesitantly. Each child comes forward now to place their flowers on the grave and their loveliness softens the bare, partially snow streaked ground.

GAIUS

(bravely)

Well, Nicholas. You knew we would come.
It's Christmas tomorrow, you know.

KAREL

I hope he won't be angry but I'm not going to be sad.

13.

CONT:

ELDORA

Remember your party and the music he brought?

KAREL

He was always like that.

14.

MED CLOSE SHOT-FREDERIK

As he presses further into the outer reaches of the crowd of children. He hears a burst of laughter now from a point near the grave. He tries to look over the heads nearest him.

FREDERIK

What are they doing. I can't see.

TYBALD

It's Karel.

The laughter erupts again.

TYBALD

He's telling about Nicholas.

FREDERIK

(impatiently)

I don't know what's so funny about being up here. People should cry up here...not laugh.

TYBALD

You didn't know Nicholas.

FREDERIK

(almost a shout)

I know I didn't know him. But how am I going to know if no one tells me. Who was he?

There is more laughter and TYBALD pushes more into the crowd so as not to miss anymore.

TYBALD

(calling out)

Tell them about the miser. Tell them what Nicholas did.

TYBALD disappears in the throng and FREDERIK'S frustration grows.

15. EXT. HALFWAY UP THE HILLSIDE
CAMERA is looking up. The voices of the children come down to us, punctuated by bursts of laughter. A young woman comes into view now, coming up the path. She stops as the sounds of the children reach her. She pauses for a moment.

16. CLOSE SHOT-THE YOUNG WOMAN
In her late twenties, she is indeed lovely..with soft, expressive eyes. Now, she resumes her journey up the path.

17. TOP OF THE HILL
FREDERIK has managed to move forward and as we see him get into the first rank around the grave itself, the last of the laughter dies.

ELDORA

Poor, Nicholas. I miss him very much.

FREDERIK

(disappointed)

Aren't you going to tell any more stories?

But now he sees the quiet mood that has fallen upon the children. To one side, the voice of a boy soprano begins the first few bars of a traditional folk song. CAMERA PULLS BACK through the many children as one voice after another joins in. Now, we see that the young woman has reached the cemetery. She stands and listens to the pure young voices ring bell-like in the cold, clear air. She too has been taken back into memory and the feeling in her eyes slowly changes from one of nostalgia to sadness. In a few moments, she moves forward and as they see her, their voices falter. She puts her arm around the nearest... and her voice joins in. As they both hear and see her, they take new heart from her and HOLLY's song rises even purer and lovelier than before. When it finally ends, the children begin to drift away. NICHOLAS goes on base each other down the hill. They are relaxed, happy children.

18. CLOSE SHOT-THE YOUNG WOMAN
She is alone now. And she moves to lay a wreath of holly on the grave. Her moment of meditation is broken by a sound from off camera.

19. NEW ANGLE
as she turns to see that it is FREDERIK'S falling OVER A gravestone. She goes to him.

HOLLY

Did you hurt yourself?

19.

CONT:

In reply, he scrambles to his feet and looks past her at Nicholas' grave.

FREDERIK

Did you know Nicholas?

She looks at the grave for a moment then turns back to the boy.

HOLLY

I knew him.

She feels the chill.

HOLLY

We'd better go. It will soon be dark.

She puts her arm around him and they start toward the path. As they reach it, the boy turns for one last look at the grave. He looks up at the young woman questioningly.

HOLLY

If you like...I can tell you about Nicholas.

They start down the hill. CAMERA SLOWLY TURNS and MOVES IN toward the grave as the first traces of snow begin to fall. The wind starts to increase and the swirls of snow become increasingly larger and more frequent. The CAMERA continues to MOVE in until the stone of Nicholas' grave is in a CU. The snow starts to pile up against the name..the wind picks up in fury and slowly..the name of Nicholas is obliterated by the snow. As it disappears, the driving snow fills the screen.....and our FLASHBACK begins.

20.

EXT. THE QUAY, DAY

SLOW DISSOLVE TO

THE driving snow fills the screen but now gradually, the face of a small boy FADES IN. A terrible winter storm is raging and we can now make out the boy fighting his way through the storm. It is NICHOLAS, a five year old. The face is worried..the mouth set strongly so as not to cry. As the CAMERA MOVES BACK with him, we can discern that we are on the quay. Now, we can further see that people are huddled in object figures, bracing themselves against the storm. A fisherman hurrying by, spies the boy. He hurries over to him.

FISHERMAN

Nicholas, go back to your house.
Go home, boy. You can't do any
good here. We'll find your people.

21. CLOSE SHOT-NICHOLAS
He remains mute, his face frozen with fright.

22. CLOSE SHOT-FISHERMAN
He peers down at the boy and his tone softens, as he places his hand on the boy's shoulder for a moment.

FISHERMAN

You can do no good here, Nicholas.

Go back.

(more kindly)

Go on, son.

He turns and hurries away.

23. ANOTHER ANGLE
as the boy remains there, seemingly unable to move. Now, a cry comes up from the small group waiting on the edges of the dock.

24. EXT. THE DOCK
A small dory is edging its way through the storm, towards the dock.

BYSTANDER

(straining to see)

Who's in it....can you tell....

MRS. BAVRAN

It's too hard to see yet.

A MAN

(calling out)

Have you found them?

No reply comes back from the dory as the wind throws the voice back.

25. THE EDGE OF THE WAITING CROWD
Unnoticed by the adults, NICHOLAS approaches and begins making his way through it. CAMERA picks him up and FOLLOWS him. Various voices fade in and out as he passes by people.

BYSTANDER

She shouldn't have gone out...

WOMAN

...she had to...there was no one else to help him....

MAN

...the storm was so sudden...there was no warning....

26. THE DORY
as it comes in alongside the dock and helping hands reach down to secure it fast. A great pall of silence descends over the waiting people. CAMERA MOVES SLOWLY PAST the grim faces of the men in the boat until it comes upon the bodies of a man and woman, lying near the stern.

27. THE PEOPLE ON THE DOCK
as CAMERA MOVES ALONG them to show the strained, shocked faces.

28. MED. SHOT
as NICHOLAS works his way toward the edge of the dock. So intent is anyone on the tragedy that they do not see him. When he reaches a point where he can see into the boat.. MRS BAVRAN spies him.

MRS BAVRAN
(a warning)
The boy...

But it is too late. He has just seen the bodies.

29. CU NICHOLAS
He does not cry out..he does not scream. But his eyes. The uncomprehending anguish is there.

30. CLOSE SHOT-THE DEAD WOMAN
Even in death, the loveliness is vivid. CAMERA PULLS BACK as the boy now tries to get into the boat. The FISHERMAN holds him.

FISHERMAN
No, boy.

MRS BAVRAN
(sharply)
Let him.

The FISHERMAN looks up at her...and then releases NICHOLAS. He goes toward the bodies and stares down at them. The wind whips his face but he does not flinch. Now, as he slowly turns away...MRS BAVRAN is standing in the boat near him. He looks up at her and the tears fill his eyes. Suddenly, he is against her and her arms go around him, holding him very tightly. He weeps deeply..silently.

CUT TO

31. INT. BEDROOM IN BAVRAN HOUSE. NIGHT
The room is dark. The CAMERA is upon the window and now it gradually PANS the room until it comes to the bed. We see NICHOLAS tossing restlessly.